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DALE ROMANS RECORDS 700TH CHURCHILL DOWNS VICTORY ON SUNDAY; TRAILS MOTT BY ONE TO BECOME CHURCHILL DOWNS' ALL-TIME LEADING TRAINER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, Sept. 17, 2017) – South Louisville native **Dale Romans** became only the second trainer in Churchill Downs history to win 700 career races beneath the track's iconic Twin Spires when 2-year-old **Promises Fulfilled** won Sunday's seventh race by four lengths under jockey **Robby Albarado**.

More importantly, the milestone victory put the 51-year-old horseman just one win back of joining **Bill Mott** as the all-time leading trainer in races won at the 143-year-old historic home of the Kentucky Derby – a record that 63-year-old Mott has held for 31 years.

Romans had one more scheduled starter on Sunday's 11-race program: **Sportscaster** in the 10th and final race. He was not present for the milestone victory. Instead, he was in Lexington scouting future prospects at the Keeneland September Yearling sale.

"You know, (Mott) could come back and pass me and blow me away if he ever wanted to come back full-time at Churchill," Romans said. "Just let me have this for one day, and I'll be happy."

New York-based Mott, who has continued to have a productive string of horses at Churchill Downs for several years under the care of assistant **Kenny McCarthy**, has held Churchill Downs' all-time win record since June 8, 1986 when he surpassed **Henry Forrest**'s 271-win total.

Romans, born and raised in Louisville and a graduate of Butler High School, grew up on the Churchill Downs backstretch learning his trade from his father, veteran trainer **Jerry Romans**, who passed away in 2000 – two years after saddling his 211th and final winner at Churchill Downs.

"I always knew what I was going to do," Romans said. "I didn't know if I'd be any successful at doing it or not. The first time as a groom I walked a horse over to the paddock from the barn I'm in today (Barn 4) I was 12 years old."

Romans took out his trainer's license in 1986 at age 18 and saddled his first winner at Turfway Park on Feb. 15, 1987, with **Miss Mindy** that he bought for \$1,500. He's recorded more than 1,900 since, including major stakes triumphs with top-level horses such as millionaire Grade I winners **Roses in May**, **Little Mike**, **Shackleford**, **Kitten's Joy**, **Silver Max**, **Keen Ice**, **Dullahan**, **Paddy O'Prado**, **Tapitsfly**, **Swift Temper**, **Brody's Cause**, **Thorn Song** and **Court Vision**.

"It took forever (to get that first win)," said Romans, who won an Eclipse Award as North America's Outstanding Trainer in 2012. "I think I ran 40-something horses before I won my first race. I didn't know if I ever was going to win a race back then. But Miss Mindy came along and that was a big thing. Everybody asks me, 'What's your biggest victory?' They want me to say Dubai World Cup or Preakness, but it might have been Miss Mindy! She got it all going. My proudest moment, besides the day my children were born, was the day my name showed up on the program as a trainer, and then to have won a race and get to the winner's circle."

Romans' first victory at Churchill Downs was Final Destroyer, who won a \$5,000 claiming race with a purse of \$6,650 on Nov. 12, 1987.

Romans, a 14-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs, experienced a breakout year in 2004 when two pivotal and life-changing horses joined his barn.

“That’s when I first started working for (Churchill Downs’ all-time leading owner) **Ken Ramsey**,” Romans said. “He told me to go to Ocala (Florida) and go over all of his babies to see who I liked. He was going to divide them up between myself, Mott and (**D. Wayne**) **Lukas** at the time; he had bought about 60 yearlings. I went up to Ocala and looked at them and there were two that I just absolutely loved. One of them was a 3-year-old that had been injured and sent to the farm and the other was a big El Prado chestnut colt. Those two horses were Roses in May and Kitten’s Joy.”

Kitten’s Joy (14-9-4-0—\$2,075,791) was crowned the 2004 Eclipse Award champion turf male after finishing second to **Better Talk Now** in that year’s controversial Breeders’ Cup Turf (GI) at Lone Star Park. Roses in May (13-8-4-0—\$5,490,187), who finished second to Ghostzapper in the 2004 Breeders’ Cup Classic (GI), also at Lone Star, concluded his career with a three-length victory in the \$6 million Dubai World Cup (GI) the following year.

“That trip to Ocala that day from Miami (to pick out those horses) was the single biggest day of my career,” Romans said. “I had always been a claiming trainer, and my father was a claiming trainer, and we never expected to be anything else. Ken Ramsey was the one that convinced me – with those two horses – that I could compete at the highest level. Those horses changed everything in my career.”

His career accomplishments include a trio of Breeders’ Cup wins – the 2009 Juvenile Fillies Turf with Tapitsfly, 2011 Mile with Court Vision and 2012 Turf with Little Mike – and a victory in the 2011 Preakness Stakes with Shackleford.

Shackleford (20-6-5-1—\$3,090,101) concluded his career with a one-length win in the 2012 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) – one of 45 stakes wins at Churchill Downs, which ranks fourth all-time.

“Everybody knows there’s one goal left out there – one major goal – and that one takes a lot of luck to get to it. That would be to win a Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs,” Romans said. “Every 2-year-old in the barn is a Derby horse until they prove they’re not.”

Romans has relied on a veteran team to achieve the prestigious 700-win milestone at Churchill Downs, from life partner and exercise rider **Tammy Fox** to longtime lead assistant **Baldemar Bahena** to farm general manager and vice president of Romans Racing & Sales **Teresa Little** to bookkeeper **Laura Hernan**. But, despite the importance of his entire team, none has been more important than **Frank Jones Jr.**, one of the winningest owners in Churchill Downs history.

“Frank Jones is the single most important person in my life to this day outside of my father, who died at (age) 57,” Romans said. “I was young when I took over the barn and Frank was there. Frank was there the day I was born. Dad and Frank were friends before of the two of them had two nickels to rub together. He’s had two trainers in all of the years he’s had racehorses and that was my father and me.

“Without him, I don’t know where I would be in life let alone horseracing. He’s always been there. He’s a steady, smart, good person that’s always been there for me, and I don’t know what I would have done without him. I don’t know how anybody gets by without a Frank Jones in their life.

“He’s also one of the most important people to Kentucky racing that nobody really knows or talks about. Between 30 years on the (Kentucky) HBPA board negotiating all the contracts and working with people like (former Churchill Downs Incorporated president and CEO) **Tom Meeker** or (Churchill Downs Incorporated Chief Executive Officer) **Bill Carstanjen** that see him as an equal to make racing better, to all of his years on the (Kentucky) Horse Racing Commission board, he’s always been up-to-date on things in the game and absolutely has been one of the biggest players to make Kentucky racing what it’s become.”

The Top 10 All-Time Leading Trainers at Churchill Downs through Sunday’s seventh race: 1. Bill Mott (701); 2. Dale Romans (700); 3. **Steve Asmussen** (614); 4. **D. Wayne Lukas** (527); 5. **Bernie Flint** (480); 6. **Tom Amoss** (451); 7. **Greg Foley** (397); 8. **Kenny McPeck** (397); 9. **Angel Montano Sr.** (369); and 10. **Dave Vance** (353).

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